

Andrew Jackson to James W. Lanier, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JAMES W. LANIER.

May 15(?), 1824.¹

¹ The letter is without date, but as it is in Eaton's handwriting it was probably written in Washington before Jackson set out for Tennessee, late in May. It seems to be a draft, dictated by Jackson and written down by Eaton. The style is not Eaton's.

I have recvd your Letter of the 2d of april

Altho I have an aversion particularly at this time to write letters on political matters, yet when my opinions are asked on any subject, I ought not, and do not, forbear freely to give them; and especially on those subjects in which the Country is much interested, and about which there is great diversity of opinion. In a letter it is impracticable to go into detail, and I can therefore only present you with a hasty outline. On both subjects embraced in your letter, during the present session of Congress we have had occasion to act; and my votes given on them and published will declose my opinions.

The domestic industry and labor of the Country, coextensive with our National Independence, and national defence in a State of war, should be encouraged and protected. This should be the first design of a Tarriff, and the second a reasonable increase of import with a view to paying the debt of the Nation, that it may not be entailed on our posterity as has been the case with the English goverment.

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As regards internal improvements, Congress can constitutionally apply their funds to such objects as may be deemed National. They may erect Fortresses and make roads and canals, where they are of a character National, not local. But the general government in the prosecution of their objects cannot exercise an exclusive jurisdiction and invade the Sovereignty of the States. They have a right to appropriate their funds, and to execute the work where, by the consent of the States thro which a road or canal is to run, authority is given. With this limitation I should say that the constitutional power was in Congress Under our Constitution. I feel satisfied that the general government cannot, but with the assent of a State, exercise authority and jurisdiction within the limits of the State; to concede a different and enlarged power would be to produce in the end a consolidation of the States, to the utter destruction of those checks and balances of power at present existing under our confederation; and which are essential to the maintenance of our government

Jealousy and the fear of encroachment by the general govt. ought not to form a pretext for denying to her the exercise of those powers which may be derived from a liberal construction of the Constitution. She is the Central power around which in their independent orbits move the respective states. Strengthen her by the encroachment made in the States and despotism may be the consequence, whereas to weaken and render her inefficient by withholding thro any jealous fears constitutional rights which properly belong to her, would be to introduce amongst the States anarchy rivalry and disunion. To keep the sovereignty of the States and the general govt properly and harmoniously poised, is the pivot on which must rest the freedom and happiness of this Country.